

**Homily for Sunday, January 30, 2022**

**We are in the middle of seven weeks of readings from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians. The readings encompass the last third of the book, Chapters twelve through fifteen.**

**For the past two weeks we have read from Chapter twelve. These readings have taught that the Holy Spirit distributes different kinds of gifts and positions of service to different members of the Church. All of them are important. All of them are needed.**

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**I guess some members of the Church at Corinth wished that they had the more prestigious jobs and flashier spiritual gifts. And so last week we read that Paul compared the Church to a human body.**

**A body has many parts to it. Each is important. The body is not just a bunch of feet, or hands, or ears, or eyes.**

**Paul also taught that some of the parts of our bodies are less honorable or presentable, and so we treat them with greater honor, we make them more presentable. He does not mention which parts he is talking about, but leaves that for us to figure out. Our more presentable parts do not need to have honor bestowed upon them. They are all a part of a whole. And they are important to each other and to the body as a whole, with all its parts.**

**Paul is always good at sending messages that challenge everybody. He might be teaching two different groups with this one image.**

**To those who have more impressive gifts - or more powerful positions (like me as your pastor) - he is reminding them that this may be God's way of dressing them up honorably. They look honorable, so perhaps they should live in a way that fits the honors that have been bestowed on them.**

**To those who are honorable and work hard and are never noticed, Paul is reminding them that the way of Christ's disciples is not the way of the world. The Blessed are the humble, the caring, and those who do not seek honors. Why would they want to trade an honorable life in order to get noticed? Why are the more colorful spiritual gifts often not the most productive?**

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**And now we get to today's passage. Paul tells them – and us – to “strive eagerly” for the greatest gifts, for a “still more excellent way.” [in Spanish – “el camino mejor de todos”]**

**It is the way of Love. Flashy gifts like tongues and prophecy, prestigious skills like speaking and teaching, genius-level intelligence – they all amount to nothing without Love. Even that all-important Faith, and that great action of Sacrificing oneself for others and God – they are worthless without Love.**

**So, Love is what brings God's touch to all we say and do. Love is the spiritual gift that one should pursue. I believe it is St. Therese of Lisieux, the Little Flower, who grasped this truth. She came to understand that if she could not do great things, she could love. She could do everything with love. She understood what Paul is writing. Without love, everything else is hollow.**

**It is only in Love that everything makes sense. And so, Paul then builds everything back up, upon the foundation of Love.**

**What is Love? Or what is the kind of Love of which Paul speaks? Well, if one is quick-tempered and nasty in the name of love, it is not the Love Paul is speaking of. Love is not an excuse to be possessive of what is loved.**

**Love from God is, again, not flashy. But Love is the substance of everything that is worthwhile, whether flashy or not, whether powerful or not.**

**Love is patient and kind. When Love is present, then self-sacrifice is Godly and produces heavenly fruit. If God's love is within our actions, then self-sacrifice has power. Or, as Paul says, “It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”**

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**Love is of God – who is eternal. God endures. Love endures, and so Love can endure all things. Faith and Hope – with Love they are the gifts and Virtues that sustain our pilgrim way. But Faith and Hope are needed because there is a Not-Yet aspect to our Life in Christ. We await His second coming. Until then, we**

**have Faith and Hope. They are not needed after the Second Coming. But God is Love. And so, Love remains. The Greatest of these – is Love.**

**Seek God, and His Righteousness. And all these other things will be given unto us. The one we seek is Him – who is Love, and fills us with Love. That we might Love as He loves.**